

REMARKS

The accompanying replacement drawing sheet containing Fig. 6 differs from the corresponding originally submitted sheet in that it omits the “(208)” legend to which the Examiner objected. And, by the foregoing specification amendment, Applicants have added reference numeral 274, to whose omission the Examiner objected. Applicants therefore request that the Examiner withdraw those objections.

By the foregoing claim amendments, Applicants have canceled claims 1-8, 10, 11, 13-16, 18-20, and 23-24, amended claims 9, 12, 17, 21, and 22 and added new claims 25-29. Claims 9, 12, 17, 21, 22, and 25-29 are pending after these amendments’ entry.

Applicants’ specification describes a system for using a network such as the Internet to obtain inquiry responses from a variety of network users. Among the features of the illustrated embodiment is one that encourages participation. As the passage that begins on specification page 8’s line 30 explains, the number of responses to his own questions that the system gives a particular user can depend on how many responses that user has given to other users’ questions. A system that employs such a concept will tend to elicit a greater level of response participation from a given-size user group than one that does not, and it will benefit from any increased response accuracy that a sense of community engendered by such interdependence may cause. New independent claim 25 defines that feature. It recites that the system receives questions from a user and sends information to that user that is based on responses that other users have provided to those questions “in such a manner that

the number of first-user-question responses by which the response information is determined depends at least in part on how many responses to other-user questions the server has received over the network from the first user.”

Now, the Examiner rejected claim 11, which was directed to a related feature, on the theory that claim 11 encompassed subject matter that a combination of U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0002482 to Thomas and U.S. Patent No. 6,236,975 to Boe et al. renders obvious. But that combination is irrelevant to claim 25’s subject matter, since neither of those references describes a system that makes the number of other users’ questions a first user has answered the basis for deciding how much feedback the system will give the first user regarding other users’ responses to the first user’s questions. As is apparent in lines 38 et seq. of Boe et al.’s column 6, the Boe et al. feature on which the Examiner relies is instead that the system bases on the first user’s answers the selection of the next question to be posed to that user. So the prior art of record neither discloses nor suggests the invention that claim 25 defines.

Another feature that the specification describes is embedding hyperlinks in questions or proposed answers presented to a user. When a user sees a selection of possible responses, for example, one or more of the possible-response entries may include a hyperlink that the user can click on to obtain more information about or clarification of that response. New independent claim 27 defines this concept, reciting that “a hyperlink is included in at least one said other-user question or proposed answer thereto.” Although the Examiner cited Thomas’s ¶ 0028 in rejecting claims 21 and 22, which recite “text, an image, a sound, and a link,” that passage does not describe including a hyperlink in the question or a proposed

answer, and Applicants have found no such feature in the prior art of record. So claim 27 defines subject matter that is patentable over the prior art of record.

New independent claim 28 defines a response-collection method in which advertisements are incorporated in the questions or proposed answers. Although, as the Examiner observed in rejecting claims 12 and 13, the Boe et al. reference does describe the general concept of causing advertisements to be displayed in connection with question submission, it is apparent from, for example, Boe et al.'s Fig. 4b that Boe et al. merely display those advertisements on the same screen as a question or proposed answer. In contrast, claim 28 recites that the signals sent to pose the questions are such that "the user questions and/or possible responses thereto include advertisements": the advertisements are included in the question or proposed response instead of merely appearing on the same screen. This means that the person responding to the question cannot ignore the advertisement; the advertisement is part of what he must read to participate in response submission. The Examiner has identified no description of such a feature in the prior art of record, and Applicants have found none. Claim 28 therefore defines subject matter that is patentable over the prior art of record.

Finally, new independent claim 29 defines the concept of basing selection of questions for transmission on keywords that the questions or proposed answers include. Although the Examiner based a rejection of claim 9, which refers to keywords, on the Thomas reference's ¶0057, that passage contains no description of basing question selection on such keywords, and Applicants have found no such description. So claim 29 defines subject matter that is patentable over the prior art of record.

In short, all independent claims define patentable subject matter, and all dependent claims do, too, at least because their dependence on patentable independent claims.

Applicants therefore request that all pending claims be allowed and that the application pass to issue at an early date.

Respectfully submitted,

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